

Chris O'Brien

From: Katrina Despinos <Kadespinos@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 9:32 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Testimony in support of H5929 and Article 12 Section 8d

**Testimony in SUPPORT of Budget Article 12 Section 12d Perinatal Doula Services
and
H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act**

Rhode Island House Committee on Finance, Wednesday April 14, 2021

Chairperson Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance,

My name is Katrina Despinos, I live in Providence Rhode Island, and am testifying as an individual. Here is my written testimony in support of H5929 and Article 12 Section 8d. This budget article is crucial to improving the health and safety of pregnant individuals, particularly Black and Brown families. A doula is a nonmedical professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. They have been found to reduce medical spending by eliminating unnecessary procedures and avoiding complications that can occur before, during, or after birth. They also reduce the premature birth rates and newborn illnesses and increase the black maternal health by providing quality and consistent care in labor and delivery.

I have had the opportunity to be a doula for over 10 years and have been able to work with many doulas in the birth community as a nurse and midwife. The biggest asset doulas bring to births is their advocacy. As a black woman and midwife, I fully understand the maternal health disparities that exist for black and brown people and how doulas can decrease these incidences of harm to this population. Research has shown black women are not being listened to during their pregnancy and birth process which could be mitigated by a doula being present. Doulas serve as a bridge to the OB world for these patients and can make a huge difference in how these patients' pregnancies, labors, and births play out. I can personally think of a time when I was a doula for a black woman who was in considerable pain and her medical staff (labor nurse, provider, anesthesiologist) were not listening to her, I then was able to advocate for her as her doula and explain what exactly the patient was feeling and why it was important for someone to address this pain. I can also think of stories as a midwife and labor nurse where doulas have helped me with explaining to the patient why an intervention was recommended or assist with positions that would aid in fetal descent, was comforting to the patient, and allowed for physiologic labor to progress naturally. These are just two examples; I could go on and on about my love for doulas and why we need them. If everyone could be offered a doula for their birth without having to worry about financial burdens of it and if doulas could get paid what they are worth that would be awesome. I truly think it would change the birth community for the better.

In closing, I urge you to support Senate Bill No. 484 Perinatal Doula Services.

Sincerely,
Katrina Despinos CNM
Providence, RI